

RANDOM POETRY

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Landscape, Brooklyn Museum of Art public domain collection on Archive

CONFINED LOVE

by John Donne

Some man unworthy to be possessor
Of old or new love, himself being false or weak,
Thought his pain and shame would be lesser,
If on womankind he might his anger wreak;
And thence a law did grow,
One might but one man know;
But are other creatures so?

Are sun, moon, or stars by law forbidden
To smile where they list, or lend away their light?
Are birds divorced or are they chidden
If they leave their mate, or lie abroad a night?
Beasts do no jointures lose
Though they new lovers choose;

But we are made worse than those.

Who e'er rigg'd fair ships to lie in harbours,
And not to seek lands, or not to deal with all?
Or built fair houses, set trees, and arbours,
Only to lock up, or else to let them fall?
Good is not good, unless
A thousand it possess,
But doth waste with greediness.

This work was published before January 1, 1925, and is in the public domain worldwide because the author died at least 100 years ago.

FOUR WINDS

Love Songs (1917)

Sara Teasdale

"Four winds blowing through the sky,
You have seen poor maidens die,
Tell me then what I shall do
That my lover may be true."
Said the wind from out the south,
"Lay no kiss upon his mouth,"
And the wind from out the west,
"Wound the heart within his breast,"
And the wind from out the east,
"Send him empty from the feast,"
And the wind from out the north,
"In the tempest thrust him forth;
When thou art more cruel than he,
Then will Love be kind to thee."

LUCIETTA. A FRAGMENT.

The Works of Lord Byron by George Gordon Byron

Lucietta, my deary,
That fairest of faces!
Is made up of kisses;
But, in love, oft the case is
Even stranger than this is—
There's another, that's slyer,
Who touches me nigher,—
A Witch, an intriguer,
Whose manner and figure
Now piques me, excites me,
Torments and delights me—

Cœtera desunt.

[From an autograph MS. in the possession of
Mr. Murray, now for the first time printed.]

SEA ROSE

H.D.

The Project Gutenberg EBook of Some Imagist Poets

Rose, harsh rose,
marred and with stint of petals,
meagre flower, thin,
sparse of leaf.

more precious
than a wet rose,
single on a stem—
you are caught in the drift.

Stunted, with small leaf,
you are flung on the sands,
you are lifted
in the crisp sand

that drives in the wind.

Can the spice-rose
drip such acrid fragrance
hardened in a leaf?

THE BLUE SYMPHONY

John Gould Fletcher

ibid

I
The darkness rolls upward.
The thick darkness carries with it
Rain and a ravel of cloud.
The sun comes forth upon earth.

Palely the dawn
Leaves me facing timidly
Old gardens sunken:
And in the gardens is water.

Sombre wreck—autumnal leaves;
Shadowy roofs
In the blue mist,
And a willow-branch that is broken.

O old pagodas of my soul, how you glittered across green trees!

Blue and cool:
Blue, tremulously,
Blow faint puffs of smoke
Across sombre pools.
The damp green smell of rotted wood;
And a heron that cries from out the water.

II
Through the upland meadows
I go alone.

For I dreamed of someone last night
Who is waiting for me.

Flower and blossom, tell me do you know of her?

Have the rocks hidden her voice?
They are very blue and still.

Long upward road that is leading me,
Light hearted I quit you,
For the long loose ripples of the meadow-grass
Invite me to dance upon them.

Quivering grass
Daintily poised
For her foot's tripping.

O blown clouds, could I only race up like you,
Oh, the last slopes that are sun-drenched and steep!

Look, the sky!
Across black valleys
Rise blue-white aloft
Jagged, unwrinkled mountains, ranges of death.

Solitude. Silence.

III
One chuckles by the brook for me:
One rages under the stone.
One makes a spout of his mouth,
One whispers—one is gone.

One over there on the water
Spreads cold ripples
For me
Enticingly.

The vast dark trees
Flow like blue veils
Of tears

Into the water.

Sour sprites,
Moaning and chuckling,
What have you hidden from me?

"In the palace of the blue stone she lies forever
Bound hand and foot."

Was it the wind
That rattled the reeds together?

Dry reeds,
A faint shiver in the grasses.

IV
On the left hand there is a temple:
And a palace on the right-hand side.
Foot-passengers in scarlet
Pass over the glittering tide.

Under the bridge
The old river flows
Low and monotonous
Day after day.

I have heard and have seen
All the news that has been:
Autumn's gold and Spring's green!

Now in my palace
I see foot-passengers
Crossing the river:
Pilgrims of Autumn
In the afternoons.

Lotus pools:
Petals in the water.
Such are my dreams.

For me silks are outspread.

I take my ease, unthinking.

V

And now the lowest pine-branch
Is drawn across the disk of the sun.
Old friends who will forget me soon
I must go on,
Towards those blue death-mountains
I have forgot so long.

In the marsh grasses
There lies forever
My last treasure,
With the hope of my heart.

The ice is glazing over,
Torn lanterns flutter,
On the leaves is snow.

In the frosty evening
Toll the old bell for me
Once, in the sleepy temple.

Perhaps my soul will hear.

Afterglow:
Before the stars peep
I shall creep out into darkness.

WITH HUSKY-HAUGHTY LIPS, O SEA!

by Walt Whitman

Walt Whitman's "With Husky-Haughty Lips, O Sea!", later a part of Leaves of Grass, originally published in Harper's Monthly in March of 1884.

With husky-haughty lips, O sea!
Where day and night I wend thy surf-beat shore,
Imaging to my sense thy varied strange suggestions,
(I see and plainly list thy talk and conference here,)
Thy troops of white-maned racers racing to the goal,
Thy ample, smiling face, dash'd with the sparkling dimples of the sun,
Thy brooding scowl and murk - thy unloos'd hurricanes,

Thy unsubduedness, caprices, wilfulness;
Great as thou art above the rest, thy many tears-a lack from all
eternity in thy content,
(Naught but the greatest struggles, wrongs, defeats, could make thee greatest - no
less could make thee,)
Thy lonely state - something thou ever seekist and seekist, yet never gain
Surely some right withheld-some voice, in huge monotonous rage, of freedom-lover
pent,
Some vast heart, like a planet's, chain'd and chafing in those
breakers,
By lengthen'd swell, and spasm, and panting breath,
And rhythmic rasping of thy sands and waves,
And serpent hiss, and savage peals of laughter,
And undertones of distant lion roar,
(Sounding, appealing to the sky's deaf ear-but now, rapport for
once,
A phantom in the night thy confidant for once,)
The first and last confession of the globe,
Outsurging, muttering from thy soul's abysses,
The tale of cosmic elemental passion,
Thou tellest to a kindred soul.

ALICE

by Paul Laurence Dunbar

Know you, winds that blow your course
Down the verdant valleys,
That somewhere you must, perforce,
Kiss the brow of Alice?
When her gentle face you find,
Kiss it softly, naughty wind.

Roses waving fair and sweet
Thro' the garden alleys,
Grow into a glory meet
For the eye of Alice;
Let the wind your offering bear
Of sweet perfume, faint and rare.

Lily holding crystal dew

In your pure white chalice,
Nature kind hath fashioned you
Like the soul of Alice;
It of purest white is wrought,
Filled with gems of crystal thought.

This work was published before January 1, 1925, and is in the public domain worldwide because the author died at least 100 years ago.

INCANTATION

by Elinor Wylie

Nets to Catch the Wind

A white well
In a black cave;
A bright shell
In a dark wave.

A white rose
Black brambles hood;
Smooth bright snows
In a dark wood.

A flung white glove
In a dark fight;
A white dove
On a wild black night.

A white door
In a dark lane;
A bright core
To bitter black pain.

A white hand
Waved from dark walls;
In a burnt black land
Bright waterfalls.

A bright spark
Where black ashes are;
In the smothering dark
One white star.

This work is in the public domain in the United States because it was published before January 1, 1925.

The author died in 1928, so this work is also in the public domain in countries and areas where the copyright term is the author's life plus 80 years or less. This work may also be in the public domain in countries and areas with longer native copyright terms that apply the rule of the shorter term to foreign works.

BEFORE THE BIRTH OF ONE OF HER CHILDREN

by Anne Bradstreet

All things within this fading world hath end,
Adversity doth still our joys attend;
No ties so strong, no friends so dear and sweet,
But with death's parting blow is sure to meet.
The sentence past is most irrevocable,
A common thing, yet oh, inevitable.
How soon, my Dear, death may my steps attend.
How soon't may be thy lot to lose thy friend,
We both are ignorant, yet love bids me
These farewell lines to recommend to thee,
That when that knot's untied that made us one,
I may seem thine, who in effect am none.
And if I see not half my days that's due,
What nature would, God grant to yours and you;
The many faults that well you know
I have Let be interred in my oblivious grave;
If any worth or virtue were in me,
Let that live freshly in thy memory
And when thou feel'st no grief, as I no harms,
Yet love thy dead, who long lay in thine arms.
And when thy loss shall be repaid with gains
Look to my little babes, my dear remains.

And if thou love thyself, or loved'st me,
These O protect from step-dame's injury.
And if chance to thine eyes shall bring this verse,
With some sad sighs honour my absent hearse;
And kiss this paper for thy love's dear sake,
Who with salt tears this last farewell did take.

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À LA MUSIQUE

Place de la Gare, à Charleville.

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Poésies complètes*, by Arthur Rimbaud

Sur la place taillée en mesquines pelouses,
Square où tout est correct, les arbres et les fleurs,
Tous les bourgeois poussifs qu'étranglent les chaleurs
Portent, les jeudis soirs, leurs bêtises jalouses.
Un orchestre guerrier, au milieu du jardin,
Balance ses schakos dans la Valse des fifres:
On voit, aux premiers rangs, parader le gandin,
Les notaires montrent leurs breloques à chiffres:
Des rentiers à lorgnons soulignent tous les couacs;
Les gros bureaux bouffis traînent leurs grosses dames,
Auprès desquelles vont, officieux cornacs,
Celles dont les volants ont des airs de réclames;
Sur les bancs verts, des clubs d'épiciers retraités
Qui tisonnent le sable avec leur canne à pomme,
Fort sérieusement discutent des traités,
Puis prisent en argent, mieux que monsieur Prud'homme!
Étalant sur un banc les rondeurs de ses reins,
Un bourgeois bienheureux, à bedaine flamande,
Savoure, s'abîmant en des rêves divins,
La musique française et la pipe allemande!
Au bord des gazons frais ricanent les voyous;
Et, rendus amoureux par le chant des trombones,
Très naïfs, et fumant des roses, des pioupious
Caressent les bébés pour enjôler les bonnes...
—Moi, je suis, débraillé comme un étudiant,

Sous les marronniers verts les alertes fillettes:
Elles le savent bien, et tournent en riant,
Vers moi, leurs yeux tout pleins de choses indiscretes.
Je ne dis pas un mot: je regarde toujours
La chair de leurs cous blancs brodés de mèches folles;
Je suis, sous leur corsage et les frêles atours,
Le dos divin après la courbe des épaules...
Je cherche la bottine... et je vais jusqu'aux bas;
Je reconstruis le corps, brûlé de belles fièvres.
Elles me trouvent drôle et se parlent tout bas...
—Et je sens les baisers qui me viennent aux lèvres...

COMPENSATION

Poems: Second Series by Emily Dickinson

FOR each ecstatic instant
We must an anguish pay
In keen and quivering ratio
To the ecstasy.

For each beloved hour
Sharp pittances of years,
Bitter contested farthings
And coffers heaped with tears.

IN AN ARTIST'S STUDIO

by Christina Rossetti

One face looks out from all his canvases,
One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans:
We found her hidden just behind those screens,
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,
A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,
A saint, an angel – every canvas means

The same one meaning, neither more nor less.
He feeds upon her face by day and night,
And she with true kind eyes looks back on him,
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

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IN THE CAROLINAS (1917)

by Wallace Stevens

First published in the January 1917 issue of The Soil: A Magazine of Art, p. 78, as part of a group of poems collectively captioned Primordia.

The lilacs wither in the Carolinas.
Already the butterflies flutter above the cabins.
Already the new-born children interpret love
In the voices of mothers.
Timeless mother,
How is it that your aspic nipples
For once vent honey?

The pine-tree sweetens my body,
The white iris beautifies me.

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THE LIGHT OF STARS

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

From *Voices of the Night*.

The night is come, but not too soon;
And sinking silently,
All silently, the little moon
Drops down behind the sky.

There is no light in earth or heaven
But the cold light of stars;
And the first watch of night is given
To the red planet Mars.

Is it the tender star of love?
The star of love and dreams?
Oh no! from that blue tent above
A hero's armor gleams.

And earnest thoughts within me rise,
When I behold afar,
Suspended in the evening skies,
The shield of that red star.

O star of strength! I see thee stand
And smile upon my pain;
Thou beckonest with thy mailed hand,
And I am strong again.

Within my breast there is no light
But the cold light of stars;
I give the first watch of the night
To the red planet Mars.

The star of the unconquered will,
He rises in my breast,
Serene, and resolute, and still,

And calm, and self-possessed.

And thou, too, whosoe'er thou art,
That readest this brief psalm,
As one by one thy hopes depart,
Be resolute and calm.

Oh, fear not in a world like this,
And thou shalt know ere long,
Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer and be strong.

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